**“Manner of Christ’s Coming” The Present Truth 4, 3.**

E. J. Waggoner

Last week we gave two texts (John 14:1-3; Hebrews 9:27, 28) which contain a direct promise of Christ’s second coming. If the subject were mentioned nowhere else in the Bible, these two texts would be sufficient. They are unequivocal statements of a fact, and the promises of God are not yea and nay. All from those texts we concluded that the second coming of Christ must be as real and literal as his first. We shall now produce positive testimony to that effect. We would first, however, remind the reader that every text that speaks of the manner or object of Christ’s coming, is additional proof of the fact that he will come again. {PTUK February 2, 1888, p. 35.1}

In his first letter to the Thessalonians, the apostle Paul warns the brethren against indulging in hopeless sorrow for their dead friends, as though they were lost. He assures them, “by the word of the Lord,” that those who live until the Lord comes will have no precedence over those who fall asleep in Jesus. We will not be with Christ in the sooner than they are. And then he proceeds to tell how this can be. “For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17. {PTUK February 2, 1888, p. 35.2}

We shall have occasion to use this text again, and we pass it for the present. Turning to the first chapter of Acts, we read the account of Christ’s ascension. In his gospel, Luke had previously written, “And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.” Luke 24:50, 51. In Luke’s second narrative we have this account: “And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.” Acts 1:9-11. {PTUK February 2, 1888, p. 35.3}

There is no mistaking these words. Christ was there in person. In bodily form, while in the act of blessing his disciples, he ascended to heaven. And the angels declared that “the same Jesus”-“the Lord himself,” 1 Thessalonians 4:16-should come in exactly the same manner as he had left the earth. Now, as showing the perfect harmony of the Bible narrative, we quote right here the words of John: “Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.” Revelation 1:7. The one who claims that the coming of Christ is death, or conversion, or anything else than a literal return to earth, squarely contradicts these plain texts. {PTUK February 2, 1888, p. 35.4}

Our Saviour foresaw that before his return many would be engaged in this very work. In order to draw the attention of man away from the real advent of Christ, as described in the Bible, Satan and his angels will transform themselves, not merely into angels of light, but into the appearance of Christ himself, and will “show great signs and wonders; insomuch that if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.” Matthew 24:24. They will claim that Christ is already come, and will work miracles to support the claim. How, then, can we be sure that they are not the Christ; here is the sure guide: “Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth; behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.” Matthew 24:26, 27. The reason why it will be impossible to deceive the elect, is because they will remember and implicitly believe the plain declarations of the Bible. {PTUK February 2, 1888, p. 35.5}

These texts prove not only that the coming of the Lord is a literal event, but that is yet future. Do you still say that it took place on the day of Pentecost? We answer that Paul’s words in Hebrews 9:28 were written many years after that time. None of the apostles had written a line at that time, and, since the resurrection of Christ, had engaged in no public work whatever. Is it claimed that the destruction of Jerusalem answers to the coming of the Lord, we remind you that the Book of revelation was written more than a score of years after Jerusalem was conquered by Titus; and in that book, besides the description already quoted (Revelation 1:7), almost the closing words are these: “And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.” Revelation 22:12. “He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly.” Verse 20. These forbid the application of the promise to any event before the close of the first century. {PTUK February 2, 1888, p. 35.6}

Again, no event has ever yet occurred comparable to the coming of the Lord as described in the Bible. Peter, in answer to those who, professing to be able to see no signs of such an event, derisively ask, “Where is the promise of his coming?” Says: “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.” 2 Peter 3:10. {PTUK February 2, 1888, p. 35.7}

The psalmist says: “For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight; that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest. Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.” Psalm 50:3-5. {PTUK February 2, 1888, p. 35.8}

The heavens have not departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; not yet as the glorious appearing of the Son of man in those opening heavens dazzled every eye as does the vivid lightning-flash. Not yet have “the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.” Revelation 6:15, 16. The time is still future when the voice of the Archangel and the trump of God shall call the dead in Christ from their graves, and when the living righteous, with glad accord, shall unite in the exclamation: “Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us; this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.” Isaiah 25:9. {PTUK February 2, 1888, p. 35.9}

That day will not pass and leave saints and sinners alike unconscious of its arrival. The Lord comes, not as an intercessor, but as a king, “without sin.” There is thenceforward no more for mercy for sinners-they receive according to their deeds; no more trials for saints-he appears to them unto salvation. This being so, it is manifestly fool-hardy in any one to say, “We shall know more about it when it comes than we do not.” Yes, we will; but those who put off their knowledge of it until it comes, will learn to their sorrow. While the signs that show that coming near are fulfilling all around us, let us search the Scriptures that we may be children of the light, and, having our lamps trimmed and burning, be able to hail our Lord with joy when he returns. {PTUK February 2, 1888, p. 35.10}

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**“Object of Christ’s Coming” The Present Truth 4, 4.**

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We have now established to points beyond controversy. First, that Christ will come again (John 14:1-3; Hebrews 9:28); and second, that his second coming will be as literal as the first (Acts 1:9-11; Revelation 1:7), the only point of difference being that it will be more glorious (Matthew 24:27; 25:31). We say that these points have been established beyond controversy, because we have read them directly from the Bible, in words so plain that a child could not misunderstand them. They need no interpretation to make them plainer. {PTUK February 16, 1888, p. 50.1}

But if the Lord is indeed coming again, it must be for some purpose; he must have some object in view. And if he was so particular to tell us of his coming, and to urge us to prepare for that great event, it must be that he has not left us in ignorance as to its object. We shall find that the Scriptures are very clear upon this point also. {PTUK February 16, 1888, p. 50.2}

The words of Christ himself demand our first attention. We have quoted the promise of Christ’s coming found in John 14:1-3. That promise also contains the reason: “If I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; *that where I am there ye may be also*.” He is coming, then, to take all his followers to himself. Those who mourned at the thought of having him apart from them, will then once more enjoy his presence. {PTUK February 16, 1888, p. 50.3}

Besides this, there is something else. Paul comforted the Thessalonian brethren in their tribulation with the thought that God himself could give them rest, and this rest he said they would receive “when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, and flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.” 2 Thessalonians 1:7, 8. With these two texts agree the words of Christ: “For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.” Matthew 16:27; and these: “And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me to give every man according as his work shall be.” Revelation 22:12. {PTUK February 16, 1888, p. 50.4}

These texts show plainly enough the object of Christ’s second coming. It is to take his people to themselves, and to take vengeance on the wicked. This latter part we will pass by for the present, and consider the promise to the disciples. From the words of Christ we would naturally conclude that there is no other way for his people to be with him except by his coming. “I will come again, and receive you unto myself, *that* where I am, there ye may be also.” The conjunction “that” denotes purpose, and is equivalent to “in order that.” When we read, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, *that* whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16), we understand that belief in Christ is the only way by which we can avoid perishing. And so when we read the promise of Christ to his disciples, we understand that if Christ were not to come, his disciples could not be with him. Indeed, if it were otherwise,-if the disciples could be with Christ without his coming for them,-what force or comfort would there be in his promise? For the only words of comfort that he had for them were that he would come to take them to himself. Moreover, we cannot imagine Jesus making an unnecessary promise; but if the disciples could be with him without his coming, he, of course, knew it, and therefore made a promise which was entirely useless. From this text, then, we must conclude that Christ’s disciples are not yet with him, for his coming is still in the future. We call the reader’s attention to other texts which confirm this conclusion. {PTUK February 16, 1888, p. 50.5}

Paul exhorts us to set our affection on things above and says: “When Christ, who is our life, *shall appear, then* shall ye also appear with him in glory.” Colossians 3:4. Note the adverb “then.” It specifies the time when the saints will appear in glory; it is when Christ appears. {PTUK February 16, 1888, p. 50.6}

The apostle Peter gives instructions to the elders of the churches, exhorting them to labor faithfully, and says for their encouragement: “And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.” 1 Peter 5:4. The report is sure, but they are not expected before Christ comes. {PTUK February 16, 1888, p. 50.7}

Again he says: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” 1 Peter 1:3-5. The saints are kept by the power of God unto salvation; but the salvation is not to be given until the last time. Or, as Peter expresses it still more plainly in the 13th verse of the same chapter: “Be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” {PTUK February 16, 1888, p. 50.8}

In the third chapter of his second epistle to Timothy, the apostle Paul speaks of the prevailing degeneracy of the last days, and recommends the Bible as the only thing that will thoroughly furnish men to good works. He then continues: “I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick [living] and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.” 2 Timothy 4:1, 2. Hear, then, we find with the judgment is to take place; in connection with the coming of Christ. But if the dead are not judged until Christ comes, it necessarily follows that they do not receive any reward until that time. And this is exactly what the Saviour said, as quoted from Matthew 16:27; Revelation 22:12. {PTUK February 16, 1888, p. 51.1}

The apostle continues his exhortation to Timothy, and says: “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.” 2 Timothy 4:7, 8. The Judge is to give crowns at that day, says Paul. At what day? Why, at the day when he judges the living and dead, “at his appearing and his kingdom.” Peter told the elders that they should receive their crown at the appearing of the chief Shepherd, and Paul says that all who love his appearing shall receive their crowns at the same time. {PTUK February 16, 1888, p. 51.2}

Paul says, “*Henceforth* there is *laid up* for me a crown of righteousness.” He had reached the close of his life, and was about to be “offered” as a sacrifice to the truth. He felt that his life-work had been faithfully done. Did he therefore expect to immediately enter upon his reward? No; he was sure of a crown, but he knew that it would not be given until the appearing of Christ. {PTUK February 16, 1888, p. 51.3}

We have seen that when Christ comes he will be accompanied by all the holy angels. Matthew 25:31. The work which the angels have to do is described in Matthew 24:31: “And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.” And this agrees with the words of the psalmist: “He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people. Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice.” Psalm 50:4, 5. By what means the saints are gathered to be with Christ, will be considered in another article. {PTUK February 16, 1888, p. 51.4}

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